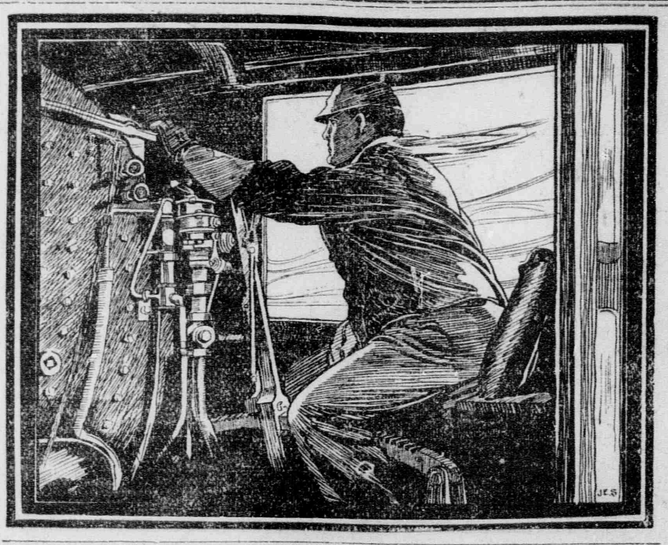
SONS OF THE RED ROSE

A STORY OF THE RAIL IN THE '80's

BY M·B·DE COURCY



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Oh! hearts in which bloom the red rose, not for you the quiet hearth, darkening fall of still eve and low of homeward kine, or even the hush of stole or cloister, the vexations of forum or mart. When deep in the center of your existence the petals stir into first life under the strong fingers of the head of their clan—the world old wonderlust—then the fragrance arises to brain, the hands grow tense and strong, the eyes bright and eager, the shackles of boyhood burst over the turgid swell of muscle and vein; then as the acid of field, flood, and storm fills the eager nostril the full-throated magician claims his own. To the weak few who fail and fall he throws only contempt and merited oblivion.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

John Gray, a young Virginian, is persuaded by Frank Howe, a brakeman, to leave profitless farming and "go railroading." Gray bids adieu to his aged father and mother, his old friends, Dr. Deane and daughter Madge, and, with Howe, "beats his way to Chicago. The freight train on which they are stealing a ride goes into a wreck, which gives Gray his first experience of the perils and tragedies of railroading. Arriving in Chicago, they receive, through the assistance of "Girlie" Mason, positions under Lanigan, the general yard master. They find a home in "Mammy" Sullivan's boarding house, where Gray meets a number of railroad men and gains an insight into their "make-up."

During supper "Girlie" comes into the room in an intoxicated condition. He is put to bed by "Scranton Pete," one of the "old-timers," who regards him as his protege. Several hours later as Howe and Gray are walking through the train yard, they see a commotion about a yard engine. Forcing their way through the crowd they find to their horror that "Girlie" has been run over while attempting to save a six-year-old girl.

CHAPTER VII—(Continued.)

JOHN sprang forward and grasping the shoulders nearest, tried with every effort of his great strength to force a passage; but the eager, crowding mass was impenetrable. Once death appears in this role, and stands, waiting, bloody-handed over crushed bones, torn flesh, and shrinking nerves, the veneer of civilization shatters over the strong fibers of the Primeval, and man stands again the foster brother of the wolf, equally responsive to the blood scent. Howe, almost crazed, ran his eyes around for some means of achieving his end, when his gaze fell upon the woman, who holding the sobbing child, yet stood near; suddenly dashing forward he placed his hand upon her shoulder, then with an interrogative nod pointed to the center of the mass. With the quick instinctive perception of her race the Italian grasped his meaning. A beckon, and Gray joined them, then Howe cried in a loud, ringing voice.

"Make way, gentlemen, please; the mother wishes to see him."

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"The mother," ran from lip to lip, as the mass surged quickly apart. It is one of the pitifully few exorcisms under which the wolf must slink back. In a moment they were standing over the prostrate sufferer. I wish the scene could be imprinted in red ink upon every bond coupon. It would be easy; oh, very, very, my masters! Your camera films need not stand undisturbed a brief week for need of a subject. This, the quivering flotsam cast by the indifferent waves of "The Commercial Age" upon the unknown rocks of eternity, has its counterpart almost hourly in some part of our land. And you, my gentlemen of the coupon scissors, and you, my lady of pink teas and hot house ceremonials, would lift your languid eyes to a very beneficial widening of your spiritual horizon, could you realize the large proportion of those rough, grimy men, who, after the agony and torture, enter the presence of the Master, their coronet the red rose, entwined with its white brothers of self-sacrifice.

"Oh, Girlie," cries Howe, stooping over the ashen face.

"Shut up," said Scranton, sternly, "none of that. Get that mob back so he can get a little air.

"Now come here, both of you," he added, as the boys had successfully accomplished his bidding. "Kneel down on each side of me, that gang might surge in. Yes, he still lives, but is mercifully unconscious; something hit his head here," pointing to a ghastly cut over the left temple, "cylinder cocks or tank steps."

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"I don't see how he got down here so soon," said Gray, "why it is not three hours since he was lying unconscious on the lounge."

"It's the cursed absinthe," replied Scranton, "it, in a nature like his, acts directly upon the brain. He came down here a few minutes ago seemingly all right. We had just started down the yard after First Lakeside, he and I on the foot board, when that child showed up, jumping up and down in the middle of the track; he jumped, and, catching her, threw her to safety, but was unable to recover himself."

Here the violet eyes opened. Dully they passed over the blurring faces. Then as they met Scranton's a gleam of recognition flashed across them.

"Say, Scranton," he began eagerly, "did the kid get out safe?"

"Yes," came the low answer.

"Well, that's settled," he said slowly, adding, "Scranton, I've got a little job yet left, that I don't like; you know, dear old friend, what I mean."

"Yes, but my boy, my boy, you have got to face it," very broken and low came the answer.

⁂ ⁂

"Face it," replied the dying boy a little bitterly, "face it. Oh, Scranton, do you know what your words mean?" Here the cold feeble hands met in an appealing clutch over the firm warm ones. "It's very easy for you, full of warm life and years before you, to say 'face it,' but to me, oh Scranton, Scranton, can you realize whom I must face in a few moments, with the awful presence of my blackened life, standing between us?" Here turning, his eyes fell on Howe.

"Frank," he continued feebly, "you go home with what is left of me, old friend, never let father know how I died. It would kill the dear old boy to know I died this way."

"What do you mean by 'this way'?" asked Scranton softly.

"The way of those who walk the 'broad road,' and come to its end without hope," came the solemn reply. The terror resting over the drawn face and quivering in the haunting words, sank deep into each sitving heart. Brooding upon the night each felt the presence of the Judge and heard the awful condemnaton of rigid justice. For a moment with the mystic shade fell a silence, broken only by the inarticulate prayer of the kneeling woman and the thin crying of the neglected child.

Suddenly Scranton raised his face—a look upon it like that upon a father listening to a frightened child relating a tale of monstrous wrong.

"Girlie, can you hear me?" he said firmly.

"Yes," framed the white lips.

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"Then, boy, listen; you remember last fall, when we were discharged from Buffalo Hospital, and broke, hungry and shivering, wandered around the yard; eating with the boys out of their meager baskets, sleeping one night beside the sand dryer at the round house, the next on the yard office tables. You remember one afternoon as we sat in the back of a saloon, looking out through the dreary fall of the autumn rain. You said: 'Scranton, this is too bad. Here I am weak, cold, and hungry, but in ten hours I could be home, to warmth and plenty, but I've treated my father so badly that I am ashamed to go to him.' A few moments later a young man from your town entered." Here Howe glanced keenly at the speaker. "After learning your condition and views, he said: 'Why Girlie, it would give your father a thousand fold more sorrow to know you were sick, destitute and repentant, but staying away from shame.' But he was unable to persuade you. Then when the next day your brother came with money, and loving commands, how you struggled with yourself, as you heard him say:

"'Our father bade me say to you, that of all the sons who had obeyed him, none were so dear to him as his homeless, penitent wanderer. The next day you insisted upon my accompanying you—and oh, boy, would to God I could go with you on your journey of tonight, my dear, dear boy."

Gray grasped Howe's hand in a crushing clasp, then threw the other arm over Scranton's bowed shoulders; the touch seemed to recall him to his calm contained self; raising his head, he, after a look of loving understanding with the blue eyes fixed so eagerly upon him, resumed.

"And when I protested you said with a laugh:

"'Guess you don't know my father, why old man, his house is as big as his heart, and that is large enough for all of my friends.'

⁂ ⁂

"So Girlie, I accompanied you home. Do you remember the stormy night we arrived at your home station? The stumbling walk along the frozen, rough road? How the wind, snow-laden, roared through the writhing leafless trees! Under the buffeting waves we trudged, shivering; then as the bright radiance of a many-windowed house streamed cheerily out against the night, you said:

"'We are all right; there are the lights of home, and Scranton you will see what a father's welcome means.'"

From the hushed crowd came the ripple of sobs, rough faces broke, as ice over dark pools, as the surge of the speaker's meaning ran through them. Gray hid his face from Howe, who silently looked into the fast glazing eyes near his.

"Then as we passed up to the porch," continued the low thrilling voice, "you knocked upon the heavy door. Say, dear boy, you evinced no fear then. As it was thrown open, outlined against the flashing light and warmth stood a figure, as the outstretched arms clasped your neck, a voice, broken in love, said:

"'My boy, my boy; home at last.' Then as the door swung shut, the roughness of the road, the bitterness of the storm, and the blackness of the night were as naught; you were at home, in your father's house."

Here the crowd reverently made room for a little delicate figure. It was Father John of the little mission nearby. One whose life was bright with the lilies of loving deeds and to whom the platitudes of dogma, or creed, were as a blasting desert wind. As the last words fell upon his ear, he pauses; then to stand unnoticed by the little group, as Scranton resumed in a voice of thrilling pleading:

⁂ ⁂

"Now, Girlie, can't you understand. The Master gave us the keynote to it all; in His truest lessons He spoke in parables; in like manner He yet unfolds His divine lessons before our blinded eyes. We are all out in the storm, hungry, cold, and so very, very weary; only a dark door separates us from the Father; it is slowly opening for you now, and, Girlie, within is love, warmth, peace, and eternal rest."

Girlie raised his eyes—sweet in loving trust—then, brokenly, said:

"Old friend, I believe you."

At the words Father John knelt, and placing his hand upon the damp forehead, said:

"My dear son, I've heard the words of your friend, and am very glad you are helped to believe. You should be the last to fear. It seems that God, at times, sees the lesson of His Son's sacrifice growing dim in the hearts of men, and then it is, to a chosen few, He gives, by the manner and way of their dying, the high honor of impressing afresh upon our hearts the true symbol of Calvary—'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'"

The door is nearly open now. The eyes grow dim under the mists of "the river." Broken, meaningless words fell from the blackened lips. Suddenly the arms extend in a tired yawn, and a weary, boyish voice rings out merrily:

"Why, Scranton, it's breaking day, but I'm tired of this. It's cold work—I'm glad it's the changing of the shift; I'll take a vacation and go home to my father."

⁂ ⁂

Scranton dropped the head gently on a folded coat; arising, stood staring out into the night. Over the stiff icyness of the dead face crept the swift fingers of the earth-old beautifier. The reckless lines of dissipation melt under the swift dawn of the long eternal vacation—the quenchless light of "My Father's House." Scranton's strong heart numbs under it's utter loneliness, but as the burden strains to breaking point, a hand steals into his; he looks into a white quivering face with earnest eyes, then a low voice whispers:

"You have not lost all of your friends, Scranton; let me, too, enter into your life and heart."

Then it is that the hand of Peter Lawrence and John Gray meet in the cement of Jonathan and David—an old, old, plastic, but oh, the highest authority, "Stronger than Death." Here Lanigan joins them.

"Scranton," he said, "I understand Mason wanted Howe to take him home. Well, I'll take care of all the arrangements; you are off for the night."

"And every night after," replied Scranton.

"What do you mean? asked the yardmaster in surprise.

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"Only this. I am through with this life for ever," came the decided reply.

"I'm glad of it," said Lanigan frankly. "You are capable of better things. But here comes the ambulance."

Scranton looked moodily at the bearers thrusting up to the body.

"Where are you going to take him?"

"To Willett's—they do the company's work."

"How far is it?"

"Only three blocks down," answered Lanigan.

Scranton, without a word, crossed to the still form, one sweep of his arm cast the astonished attendants back; then stooping, he raised it tenderly in his arms.

"Lead the way," he said sternly. Then with the dear head resting its last upon his shoulder—Gray and Howe following closely—he passed, towering in his greasy overclothes, out into a new life.

In a luxrious library in an Eastern town a stately head rests quietly amid the papers strewn upon a great table. Before it the fateful yellow of a telegram. To thousands, the silver head was as the white plume of Navarre; ever in the van of fiercely contested rightful struggle or marking the Nestor of the council chamber; but the great pitying hand resting upon the head of the father, was wide enough to rest alike upon another—only one with iron gray hair trailing disorderingly over clasped hands, amid the squalid surroundings of a neglected kitchen; but the Infinite eyes became very tender, as from the lips of each came the unavailing moan, "My boy, my boy."

VIII.

Long after midnight Howe and Gray sat silently in their dingy room. Outside from the near distance came the clash of cars and the never-ceasing purr of flying engines, but over all hung the shadow of the grisly hand, its chill fingers resting upon a closed life-book.

"Howe," said Gray softly, "how is it that two such dissimilar characters as Dr. Deane and Scranton talk so nearly alike?"

Before answering, Howe sat a moment in deep thought.

"I can only explain it in this way. You remember how Dr. Deane talked to your father? Well, the only difference between him and Scranton is that the one feels and understands; the other feels and acts. I've seen a young girl's eyes flash like a banner when standing before a great heroic picture, and I've also seen the same thrilling gleam in the faded eyes of age when from a reader's lips would fall the sagas of our everyday heroes. The reason of what you have heard from Scranton tonight rings in as a logical parallel. Deep in the hearts of all who understand as they do is an altar dedicated to the known God. The true children of the Red Rose have an instinctive, childlike belief, one as old as the Round Table. From the days of Arthur, through the ages of chivalry, down to today, its roots have only throve in hearts quick to respond. the petals only to grow to their divine beaut, when nourished upon swift, generous tears. Brave hearts as well as brave hands are untrammeled, the ligature of doctrine or the club of an edict are to them as the fancied monsters of childhood. The knight riding alone on fearsome forays or sinking under the blows of thronging foes committed his soul to 'Our Lady'—the boy dying tonight, went clear-eyed, gladly to "Our Father."

Here the speaker paused. Through the long days of after life John Gray loved best to remember his friend as he looked then.

"You will not be expected to begin work in the morning," Howe said to John, as they wearily threw themselves

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across the bed. "I expect to start on my awful errand about noon, and, oh, John, how I dread it."

Gray could only press his hand sympathetically. Morning was breaking when Gray awoke. His eyes fell upon Scranton sitting by the window. For a moment he lay quiet; the weary poise of head and the absorbing grief showing in the strong-lined face, and steadfast eyes almost awed him. Scranton seemingly felt the compassionate eyes upon him, for turning he said:

"Awake Howe, I've something to say to him."

⁂ ⁂

Soon the trio were seated around the little table, upon which lay a long red leather bocketbook.

"Boys," said Scranton, "when he went out to work last night he was dressed as he came from the street. I claimed his clothing at the undertaker's, and now I wish with you to go through this book. It will of course have to be sent to his father, and I want no taint of the poor boy's life left in it."

Solemnly, he snapped off the elastic band, the same feeling in the mind of each—of the careless hand that had last put it there. Soon the contents lay upon the oilcloth. Only a few letters, a couple of old passes, a little pile of newspaper clippings, and a few bills of low denomination. Picking up the letters Scranton quickly looked at each, then laid them reverently down, saying, "They are all from his father." Then spreading out the clippings he subjected them to a like rapid investigation. As the last fell from his fingers and with something like a sob in his voice, he said: "I've turned this trick a great many times, but never on as clean a book as this. Look at those clippings—they are all of his father's successes, or kindly words as to his career.

"The last one from yesterday's Post tells of his elevation to the bench of the court of appeals of his State."

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"His father will value it," said Howe, "it will be a pleasure to give it to him."

"Yes," answered Scranton, as he replaced the band over the restored treasures, "I'll have them sealed as though they had never been tampered with. Now, boys, we have yet a little time, and I want to talk with you. I am going to leave here today, and, Gray, I wish you to go with me; Howe can join us when he returns."

"Never mind about asking questions," he continued, ignoring his surprised companions, "I have a lot to tell you and only a few moments to do it in. My name is Peter Lawrence, and six years ago I was a train dispatcher on the Central Union, with as good a future before me as any man could wish. I had the night trick on the second district of the High Line division. It was what in railway parlance is called a 'snap.' Only one passenger train and two high-class scheduled freights, and extras scarcer than hen's teeth. On the 110-mile district I had only two open night offices. With a three-column train sheet usually duplicating the time card, you can easily see I had lots of time at my disposal—time that I usually killed by pounding my ear. Things had run along in this way for over three years. Having all the sleep needed while on duty made the days hang long. I roomed and boarded in the great company hotel; it was the hang-out for all the road men—engineers, conductors, firemen, brakemen, and yardmen—and a merry, hearty, convivial lot they were. The company ran a bar in the building, and it was an extremely well-paying investment. In their peculiar humor the boys dubbed it the 'return section.' Men would come in half frozen from the awful mountain storms, sit in the barroom unwashed, their overclothes still on, drinking hot whisky with the men going out. Others would sit in groups, enjoying to the utmost the clublike comforts of the alluring, company-provided rum hole. Insensibly I dropped into the game, and soon it was an exception that I went on duty better than half drunk.

⁂ ⁂

"One bleak afternoon—it was October 18, 1875—I was in a little back room, half full, bucking a little game of stud; my companions were the engineer and conductor of our fast freight, No. 33. The engineer, Sam Ward, was a particular friend of mine, a great, cheery young fellow, eyes, nerves and hands steady as a rock, absolutely fearless, yet with fine, quick judgment—he was of the timber a train dispatcher banks upon. After a while I paired to an ace in the hole, breaking the pair. So the cards were thrown aside and we began over our whisky to comment upon a radical change lately effected in our passenger service.

"'That is what comes of trying to run a Rocky mountain railroad from a back room in New York,' sneered the conductor contemptuously. 'Those old high-collared idiots may be all right in their own little games of stock jobbing—or robbing—but they are out of their element when they try to beat the Almighty's layout.'

"'Just what I said,' he answered to my surprised look. 'The Lord made these hills, and he wouldn't expect man to make an engine capable of snatching six coaches up them forty miles an hour. I doubt that He would try it himself,' he growled meditatively.

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"Despite my half-shocked amusement I realized his comment had a heavy basis of fact. We received our most important train from the Midland solid at Youngs, our western terminal. Our first district, although only eighty miles in length, was all a heavy ascending grade, and the previous time cards, made by men aware of the conditions, had always allowed No. 1 two hours and forty minutes to Eagle Nest; on the new card, then used about ten days, it had been cut down thirty minutes by imperative orders from the general passenger department in New York. My jurisdiction extended over the second district—from Eagle's Nest to Hallam. The first twenty miles from Eagle's Nest to Kane, was, too, a heavy ascent. The result was the flyer was badly fogged in the first hundred miles of her flight.

"'Say, Pete,' said Ward, 'there is something I want to take up with you, you know we are due at Percy at 11:45 p. m., right at the foot of that infernal ninety-foot grade to Kane. Now No. 1 is carded to leave Eagle's Nest at the same time, and is due at the top of the mountain—Kane—at 12:15 a. m. You never get her at Eagle's Nest under fifteen minutes late, then she is good to drop ten minutes more up to Kane, making it a safe proposition to gamble on her not passing there before 12:40 a. m. Now, our regular meeting point is half way up our side of the mountain—Black's—at 12:20 a. m. With a swing and a warm train I can pull the hill in forty minutes, but as it is now I pull into Black's about midnight, sand almost gone, and lay there forty minutes. You know what happens these bitter nights—thirty below, north wind blowing a never-ceasing gale—by the time we are let out, every box on the train is frozen up. Why, when we back out to get a straight line bite, the squeaking of those journals takes me back to when I drove a bull team before a bob sled of lumber 4 o'clock on a frosty Pennsylvania morning.

"Then the fun begins. That old goat you keep at Percy as a freight helper ought to be called a detainer. I'll slack, cuss, and jam until a drawhead comes out or I am obliged to double, and then perhaps go to Peale for water. Then after going in two hours late, just as I am pounding my ear, the caller comes howling around with an 'immediate reply' message, 'What detained you between Percy and Eagle's Nest?' Now, Pete, you can avoid all this, give us an advance order from Percy to Kane, and at least twenty minutes of One's time—then if Mr. Train freezes up we are on top of the hill, with time to kill to come in here on the dot.

⁂ ⁂

"'Very well,' I answered, 'your idea is a good one—you are not the only disturbed sleeper on that combination by a good deal.'

"'All right,' said the conductor arising, 'let's have one more, then we must go, Ward. It is nearly leaving time and Pete, we will expect the order paddle at Percy tonight.'

"'Here is something to keep you in mind of us,' laughed Ward as he extended a little flask to me. 'It's good, a friend sent me a dozen a few days since.'

"I took the proffered reminder.' Would that God in his mercy, would then and there have vouchsafed to me a tithe of the bitter remembrance lurking in its devilish depths. At 5 o'clock seated at the hotel's office window I answered Ward's gayly waved farewell. I can see him yet, Scotch cap down over his ears, a red handkerchief around his brawny neck, leaning in the high flush of life from his cab window.

"I went on duty at 7 o'clock. My pardner said to me after turning the trick:

"'No messages, except this, pointing to a piece of paper lying on the desk.'"

Here Scranton produced from an inner packet a long, black book; opening it he extracted a small roll of papers; selecting one he laid it upon the table. The boys looked at the worn yellow paper curiously, as smoothing it out he said:

"Read it."

It ran thus:

⁂ ⁂

"Eagle's Nest, 10-18-75.

"H. N. L.: Engine 175 with broken tender, rear end rails, for Salem shops, O. K. to run light after 10 K. P. M.

"'W. L. N., M. M.'

"'All right, I answered,'" resumed Lawrence, "'I'll run her first No. 1.'" Suiting the action to the word I called up Eagle Nest, sending the following order:

Here he smoothed out another paper.*

"Engine 175 will run as first No. 1 Eagle Nest to Hallam displaying signals for following section."

"You will notice that it is checked received Eagle Nest at 7:10 p. m. It was a wild, bitter night, with only two open offices, and nothing but ice in my district. I had little to do, so passing into the washroom I took a good swig from poor Ward's bottle. Later in the evening I repeated the process, then sat drowsily listening to the dashing hail beating against the windows. I think I must have dozed off, for I've only an indistinct remembrance of hearing Percy's insistent calling. Breaking, I answered. Here is what I received," and Lawrence unfolded another paper:

⁂ ⁂

"'Percy, 10-18-75.

"'P. L.: Ward is kicking the office down for an advance time order. What are you going to do about it?—Operator.'

"Cutting into the through wire, I asked Youngs how No. 1 was running, and got this reply," pointing to another paper:

"'Youngs, 10-18-75.

"'P. L. Hallam: No. 1 from here twenty (20) mins. late with heavy train, will strike Eagle Nest about thirty-five (35) minutes late.—H. J. M., Despr.'"

"Now notice the time on these orders—see it's 11:40 p. m. and 11:42 p. m. respectively:

"'To train No. 33, Percy: Train No. 33 will run advance time Percy to Kane.—P. L.'"

"And here is the other:

"'To No. 33, Percy: You can use forty (40) minutes in the time of No. 1.—P. L.'"

"'Ward says you have given him the run of his life, and that he will get you another reminder,' clicked Percy. That gave me a thought. Raising my blinking eyes to the clock I saw it was 11:43; my bottle was nearly empty, and the bar closed at 11:45 for Sunday. The manager took special pride in living literally up to the rule; the prospect of a dry Sunday drove all else out of my mind. As I caught my hat, Eagle Nest asked:

"'Anything for No. 1?'"

"I glanced at the clock muttering, 'Lots of time, No. 1 will be nearly forty minutes late, send the late order when I get back.' A quick rush got me down to the bar just as it was closing; amid laughing, friendly jeers I got my pint, then quickly returning to the office, hurried the time order to Eagle Nest. On top of the last word came the inquiry, as fast as Pat Marston's fingers could weave it:

"'What do you mean? First No. 1, engine 175, has been gone five minutes.'

"'May you never know what words akin to those mean! To sit powerless as other men's lives are ground to dust by your carelessness. There is yet a chance, with a prayer that 33 might have been detained at Percy, I asked:

"'Has 33 left?' 'Tail lights just out of sight,'" came the laconic reply.

⁂ ⁂

"Taking the bottle from my pocket I threw it crashing against the side of the room, then for an instant I believe the full realization of torment, as conceived by insane brains, swept over me. I could see it all. The light engine dashing on the second, splitting the minutes over marking frogs. It was 12 o'clock midnight now, she was just passing Arnolds—a blind siding. I could see her as she dashed into No. 4 tunnell, the red lamps glowing against her shining front. Then on the other side of the mountain—33; the fierce red flood of lignite sparks dancing in the black smoke ever interweaving in the canyon's wind. Ward, his broad back bending forward, left hand on the throttle, right on the sand lever, his eyes stealing anxiously to the steam gauge as the firemen bends to the door. At 12:05 I sent this message to Eagle Nest.'

"With white face and shaking fingers he unfolded another slip. The boys read:

"'Hallam, 10-19-75.

"'W. L. M.—M. M.

"'S. T. W.—T M.

"'Eagle Rock.

"'Arrange to run wrecking train with full force and all available doctors to point west of Kane. Notify engineer to run carefully beyond Kane looking out for engine 175 on First No. 1 in collision with No. 33.—P. L.

"'10, 19; 12:10 a. m.'

"You will notice the time on this message," said Lawrence in an agonized whisper. "I could have almost yelled aloud. They were only about three miles apart now; between them a long, curved snow shed. I'd rode engines through it many times—its hardest pull was on the west end the boys with heavy trains always "hit" the east opening—bar well down, sand-sprinkled rails, injectors off, and both pops roaring——

(To Be Continued Next Sunday.)

*This story antedates the present standard order system; under present usage Lawrence's trouble would have been avoided.—Author.

Our Own Riviera

WRITING home from travel abroad to his paper, the Louisville Courier-Journal, this is what patriotic Henry Watterson has to say of the Riviera as compared with well-known spots in his native land:

One fiction I am tolerably surely exploding—at least in my own mind—and that is the climate of the south of France. By comparison with Florida and southern California, it is abominable. Of course, it got its vogue by comparison with the climate of London and Paris. In any event it is a fake.

I can conceive no worse place for the consumptive than Nice, and, though there is a good deal of rivalry between Cannes and Menton, which is best protected in winter, they are all alike. In spite of the sunshine, of which there is no lack, they are cold and damp. The dreaded "mistral" is only an occasional visitor, but there are sharp winds daily, while the sea-air lacks salt. In the early time, people with weak lungs came here from England and the north, because there was nowhere else to go.

Nobody should come to the Riviera who is seeking summer. Even the "sunny land" of Provence is a figment of poetic fancy. Yet they talk of little else. In Wall street the topic of conversation is stocks and bonds. They think only of money. Even the bears deal in billions and trillions. At Nice the topic is climate. The first thing the servant says in the morning when he opens your blinds is to tell you what a fine day it is; though it be blowing a gale, or nearing zero. The mountain tops are white with snow. The thermometer reports are sent out by the hotels and regularly falsified. Furs and heavy overcoats are in constant demand. At night it is never safe to go abroad except closely wrapped.

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No Place for the Sick.

It is paradise enough for the strong and hardy. The rain is infrequent. There is no slush to wade through, even after a downpour. The streets and highways are beautifully kept. All things minister to the appetite. In short, the Riviera is a famous playground. The golf fiend is at home here. The all-around athlete and the sporty, outdoor girl find nothing to complain of. But the sick! They had best give the Mediterranean a very wide berth.

The day is coming when the invalid world will flock to Florida, Colorado, and California. Already the wealth of one man, along with decorative genius and prodigal enterprise, has made of the east coast of Florida everything the Riviera is, and a great deal more. The west coast holds itself yet in reserve. But it is only a question of time when the whole of the country about Charlotte harbor and Sanabel island, thence to Meyers and Naples, will form a succession of winter resorts, of winter palaces, both public and private, with a climate far transcending in geniality of temperature anything to be found in Europe, north of Andalusia, or even in the Africa of Algiers and Cairo.

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Mr. Flagler a Pioneer.

Mr. Flagler is a pioneer. The success which he has achieved on the east coast will tempt millions to the west coast, which is still more beautiful. And that which is happening, and will continue to happen in Florida, cannot be withheld from lower California and Colorado. More and more Americans are beginning to discover the virtues of their own country. Of its money-making capabilities there has never been any doubt. Its adaptability to artistic development once established, the rest is bound to follow.

On this side of the water life is becoming harder every year. Even its external features grow more sinister and coarse. The resident American is more and more of misfit. If a man, he is wholly out of place; if a woman—why the less said of her the better. Doubtless the nouveaux riches in the United States are odious enough. Purse-pride, wherever one finds it, is detestable. In Europe the money standard makes its way to the forefront. It was the millions of the Hebrew bankers back of Dreyfus which freed justice from an unwilling militariat, not his "case," strong as that was. With us there is the hope which is supposed to take its bearings from a free press and an educated public opinion. We are young yet. We have a deal to learn. But, in spite of our alleged recklessness, we go exceeding slow in our political time-tables.

DOES NOT WORRY ABOUT DEBTS.

"Well, my friend, I never pay my old debts; I forget them."

"And your new ones?"

"Oh, I let them get old."—Fliegende Blaetter.